

When Woodie Was It

BY SEWELL FORD.

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You heard something about it, eh? Well, long's they didn't get our pictures in the evening papers, with a diagram of how it happened, we're here to let off easy. And I ain't nursin' any grouches, either. It wasn't a case of somethin' comin' along that couldn't be dodged. It looked like I went out and hunted for this.

You see, since I put the studio on summer schedule I've been pickin' for Primrose park every Saturday about noon, to see if me estate out there's grown any durin' the week. Well, the last time I does it, I drops off about two stations too soon, thinkin' a little outdoor leg-work would do me good.

It was a grand scheme, and I'd been all right if I'd followed the trolley track along the post-road; but the gasoline carts was so thick and I got to breathin' so much gravel that I switches off. I takes a nice-lookin' lane that appears like it might bring me out some where near the place I was headin' for; but as I ain't much on findin' my way where they don't have signboards at the corners, the first thing I knows I've made so many turns I don't know whether I'm goin' out or comin' back.

It was while I was doin' the stray act, and wonderin' if it was goin' to shower, or was only just bluffin', that I bumps into this incubator bunch, and the performance begins. First squint I took I thought somebody'd been settin' out a new kind of shrubbery, and then I sized it up for a lot of umbrella fans that had been dumped there. But pretty soon I sees that it's nothin' but a double row of kids, all dressed the same. There must have been more'n a hundred of 'em, and they was standin' quiet by the side of the road, just as much to home as if that was where they belonged. Now, it ain't the reg'lar thing to find any such aggregation as that on a back lane, and if I'd had as much sense as a family horse in a carriage I'd shied and rambled the other way. But I has to get curious to see what it's all about, so I blazes ahead, figurin' on takin' a good look as I goes by.

At the head of the procession was a lady and gent, holdin' some kind of exercises, and as I comes up I notices something familiar about the lady's black hair. She turns around just then, gives a little squint, and makes for me with both hands out. Sure, it was her—Sadie Sullivan, that was. Well, I knew that Sadie was liable to be floatin' around anywhere in Westchester county, for that seems to be her regular stampin' ground since she got to travelin' with the country-house set; but I wasn't looking to run across her just then and in that company.

"Oh, Shorty!" I says, "you're a life-saver! I've half a mind to hug you right here."

"If it wasn't for givin' an exhibition," says I, "I'd lend you the other half. But how does the life-savin' come in? And where'd you collect so many kids all of a size? Is that pop, there?" and I jerks me thumb at the gent.

"Come over and we'll tell you all about it," says Sadie. I says, "I want you to know my friend, Professor McCabe, Shorty, this is Captain Sir Hunter Kenwoodie of the British war office."

"Woodie," says I, "how goes it?"

"Chawmed to meet you, I'm suah," says he.

"Oh, splash!" says I. "You don't mean it?"

Well, say! he was a star. His get-up was somethin' between that of a mounted cop and the leader of a Hungarian band, and he was as stiff as if he'd been dipped in the glue-pot the day before. I'd heard somethin' about him from Pinckney. He'd drawn plans and specifications for a new forage cap for the British army, and on the strength of that he'd been sent out to the States to inspect belt buckles, or somethin' of the kind. Talk about your cinch jobs! those are the lads that can pull 'em out. On his off days—had he five or six a week—Woodie'd been ornamentin' the top of tallies, and residin' up there in places as Rockywold and Apawamis Arms.

Seems like he'd discovered Sadie, too, and had booked himself for her steady company. From her story it looked like they'd been takin' a little drive around the country, then they'd checked against this crowd of kids in checked dresses from the incubator home. There was a couple of nurses herdin' the bunch, and they'd all been sent up the sound on an excursion barge, for one of these fresh air blow-outs that always has an invitation for trouble. Everything had gone lovely until the chowder barge bumped so hard that she sprung a leak.

There hadn't been any great danger, but the excitement came along in chunks. The crew had run the barge ashore and landed the whole crowd, but in the mix-up of the women had backed off the gang plank into three feet of water and the other had sprained an ankle. The pair of 'em was all to the bad when Sadie and the Cap came along and found 'em tryin' to lead their flock to the nearest railroad station.

Course, Sadie had piled right out, loaded the nurses into the carriage, tellin' the driver to find the next place where the cars stopped and come back after the kids with all the buggies he could find, while she and Woodie stood by to see that the incubators didn't stampede and get scattered all over the lot.

"So, here we are," says Sadie, "with all these children, and a shower coming up. Now, what shall we do and where shall we go?"

"I'll stay here," says he, and bolts under cover.

The incubator kids swings like they was on a pivot, and piles in after him.

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we knows they all falls in behind, two by two, hand in hand, and goes trottin' along behind him. "em!" says Sadie.

"Whoa! Cheese it! Come back here!" I yells.

They didn't give us any more notice, though, than as if we'd been holdin' our breath. The head pair had their eyes glued on the Captain. They were the leaders, and the rest followed like they'd been tied together with a rope. They was all girls, and I guess they'd average about five years old. I thought at first they all had on aprons, but now I sees that every last one of 'em was wearin' a life-preserver. They'd tied the things on after the bump, and I suppose the nurses had been too rattled to take 'em off since. May-be it wa'n't a sight to see them bobbin' up and down!

Woodie, he looks around and sees what's comin' after him, and waves for 'em to go back. Not much! They stops when he stops, but when he starts again they're right after him. He unlimbers a little and tries to break away, but the kids jumps into the double-quick and hangs to him.

I knew what was up then. They'd sized him up for a cop, and cops was that they was used to. You've seen those lines of home kids bein' passed across the street by the traffic squad? Well, havin' lost their nurses, and not seein' anything familiar lookin' about Sadie or me, they'd made up their mind that Woodie was if. They meant to stick to him until somethin' better showed up. Once I got this through my nut, I makes a sprint to the head of the column and gets a grip on the Cap.

"See here, Woodie!" says I, "you're elected! You'll have to stay by the kids until relieved. They've adopted you."

"Aw, I say now," says he, "this is too beastly, absurd, y'know. It's a bore. Why, if I don't find some place or other very soon I'll get a wetting."

"You can't go anywhere without those kids," says I, "so come along back with us. We need you in our business."

He didn't like it a little bit, for he'd figured on shakin' the bunch of us; but he had to go, and the procession did a snake movement then, and the road that would have done credit to the Seventh regiment.

I'd been lookin' around for a place to make for. Off over the trees toward the sound was a flag-pole that I reckon stood on some kind of a building, and there was a road runnin' that way.

"Well, mosey down towards that," says I, "but we could make better time, Cap'n, if you'd get your party down to light-weight marchin' order. Suppose you give the command for them to shed them cork jackets."

"Why, really, now," says he, lookin' over the crowd kind of helpless, "I haven't the faintest idea how to do it, y'know."

"Well, it's up to you," says I. "Make a speech to 'em."

Say, that was the dopest bunch of kids I ever saw. They acted like they wa'n't more'n half alive, standin' there in pairs, as quiet as sheep, waitin' for the word. But that's the way they bring 'em up in these Homes, like so many machines, and they didn't know how to act any other way. Sadie saw it, and dropped down on her knees to gather in as many as she could get her arms around.

"Oh, you poor little wretches!" says she, beginnin' to sniffle.

"Cut it out, Sadie!" says I. "There ain't any time for that. Unbuckle them belts. Turn to, Cap, and get on the job. You're in this."

As soon as Woodie showed 'em what was wanted, though, they skinned themselves out of those canvas sinkers in no time at all. We left the trucks in the road, and with the English gent for drum-major, Sadie in the middle, and me playin' snapper on the end, we starts for the flag-pole. I thought maybe it might be a hotel, but when we got where the road opened out of the woods to show us how near the sound we was, I sees that it's a yacht club, with a lot of flags flyin' and a whole lot of boats anchored off. About then we felt the first wet spots.

"They've got to take us into that club-house," says Sadie.

We'd got as far as the gates, one of these fancy kind, with a hood top over the porte, like he rode in a sun-truck in the road, and with the English gent for drum-major, Sadie in the middle, and me playin' snapper on the end, we starts for the flag-pole. I thought maybe it might be a hotel, but when we got where the road opened out of the woods to show us how near the sound we was, I sees that it's a yacht club, with a lot of flags flyin' and a whole lot of boats anchored off. About then we felt the first wet spots.

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"So, here we are," says Sadie, "with all these children, and a shower coming up. Now, what shall we do and where shall we go?"

There wasn't anything to do then but stop under the gate, seein' as the club-house was a hundred yards or so off. I snaked Woodie out, though, and made him help me range the youngsters under the middle of the roof, and when we'd got 'em packed in four deep, with Sadie squeezed in too, there wa'n't an inch of room for either of us left.

And was it rainin'? Wow! You'd thought four eights had been rung in and all the water towers in New York were turned loose on us. And the thunder kept ripplin' and roarin', and the chain-lightnin' streaked things up like the flash of one of Colonel Palmer's exhibits.

"Sing to them!" shouts Sadie. "It's the only way to keep them from bein' scared to death. Sing!"

"Do you hear that, Woodie?" says I across the top of their heads. "Sing to 'em, you lobster!"

The Captain was standin' just on the other side of the bunch. He'd got the front half of him under cover, but there wasn't room for the rest; so it didn't do him much good, for the roof caves makes a stab at "Everybody Works But Father," and Sadie tackles something else.

"Only fu-fu-fawny!" says he. "I don't fu-feel like singin', y'know."

"Make a noise like you did, then," says I. "Come on, now!"

"But really, I can't," says he. I that three-cornered sympathy of ours is out loose they begins to look wild, some of 'em was diggin' their fists into their eyes and preparin' to leak brine when all of a sudden Woodie gets into his stride and lets go of three or four notes that sounded as if they might belong together.

That seemed to cheer those youngsters up a lot. One or two pipes up a kind of scared and tremble, but hangin' onto the tune, and the next thing we knew they was all at it, givin' us "My Country 'Tis of Thee" in as fine shape as you'd want to hear. We quit then and listened. They followed up with a couple of good old hymns, and if I

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Jokers on the Rails

Locomotives That Will Play Pranks on Their Engineers.

(New York Sun.)

"Bill," said the engineer, "was telling me about an engine out in the western part of the state the other day that did a queer thing."

"They were standing all quiet enough at a station. The engineer was out on the board and the fireman was down on the ground doing something. All at once, just how or why I don't know, and Bill couldn't figure it out himself, the engine broke away from the tender and started off all alone down the road."

"The first thing she did was to knock the engineer down and cut both legs off. She kept on down the line eight or ten miles, running wild. At a crossroads she smashed into a train and that laid her out."

"I call that pretty sad kind of a joke; but it shows that engines will do sometimes. Some engines are just about like folks in that respect. They are always looking out for a chance to fool somebody and play some kind of a prank on 'em."

"I remember one engine we fired down on the Southern Soo. I was firing then. There were some heavy grades on the line and we had big loads to haul. Took a man every minute of the time to keep steam up."

"We never got through on time that I know of. It was a common thing for us to get telegrams something like this from headquarters: 'What's the reason you are not making your time? If you can't do it we will get somebody that can.' That made Tom the

maddest of anything you could say to him.

"He was a hard-working fellow and did his level best. I remember once he sent back word after he got one of these messages, 'If you think you can get this train through on time you'd better come and try it.' But no one ever came."

"Well, one day we got half way up one of them steep grades when the engine balked right on the main track. Tom thought somebody might have set some of the brakes and he hollered to the men to let them up, but not a brake was set anywhere."

"The old engine had just got tired, that was all, and she wouldn't stir a peg till she got rested and then she picked right up and went like mad all the rest of the way. She acted just like a man that has been licked and hurried till he couldn't stand it any longer."

"Another time that same engine took the bit in her teeth and went sizzling down a mountain run as if the Old Nick was after her. Tom had the steam all shut off and the air pushing back hard, and still the old engine just went rushing along."

"It was enough to make your hair stand on end. I stood in the door half the time ready to jump if we left the track. When we got down to the level she just got off her tantrum and sailed along as peaceful as you please."

"But the funniest engine I ever saw was one that I had myself out on the western coast. It was the first one I ever took after I got my commission as engineer."

"That engine fairly laid awake nights hatchin' up ways to make it interest-

ing for us boys. If we were stopping to get a drink and I was down oiling up she seemed to know that then was her chance. She'd just start right out and buckle in like mad to get away from us."

"You couldn't trust her to stand a minute. She was just like some horses; she wouldn't stand a minute without hitching when she took a notion not to."

"One time we came drealed near having an awful time with that engine. The K. & M. run right along by the side of our track for seven or eight miles in one place. We used to blow us what on that stretch together."

"Once in a while we would let ourselves out a little there, though it wasn't strictly according to orders, and try the temper of our engines. The folks back in the coaches seemed to like it."

"It was one dark night with a storm over the prairie. The rails were slippery and we hadn't been making our time very well. We left Waupack forty minutes late."

"Well, just as we got fairly onto Waupack, where the K. & M. bends in toward our line, I felt the old thing give a mighty leap ahead. But as soon as I saw the headlight of the night express on the K. & M. I knew we were in for a race. Our engine was setting down for business."

"Well, sir, I tried to hold her in. I know they said at the office that I was to blame for it, but if I was to die I would tell them the truth; I held her back all I could."

"I shut off the steam. I tried to keep the air on so that she wouldn't get away. I began to feel a little scared myself."

"For the first mile or two it was about an even thing with us. We kept right along side by side. I could see the men over the K. & M. were doing their level best to keep up with us. The fire fairly flew out of the smokestack. And all the time we were not using a pound of steam. Still our drivers were just jarring 'round and 'round."

"I could see the heads leaning out of the windows of their train and I had no doubt it was the same way with our folks; they all wanted to win. We just rocked from side to side. The old engine was going to show us what she could do. She had the bit in her teeth!"

"And we began to gain. She had it in her to win if you only let her out; I'll say that for her. She was the fastest engine I ever had anything to do with. You always had to hold her back."

"Just as we were pulling into San Tone the thing that made my hair white happened. We were then two or three train lengths ahead of the K. & M. For quite a while I had been so busy trying to keep the upper hand of the engine that I hadn't any time to watch the blocks."

"All at once I looked up and there right opposite us was a signal set against us. That meant that we'd got to stop and wait for orders. I shoved the air down harder than ever, but the old thing never cared. On she pounced like a mad animal."

"I let sand on the rails and that made no difference. It looked as if we were bound for destruction."

"It went on that way for five minutes and I expected every minute something would happen. Then all at once

she began to sag back. We could see the lights of San Tone a little way ahead, and I knew we were just at the crossing of K. & M. It would have cost me my job if we had run over that without stopping."

"But she pulled up just at the crossing, as calm as if she never had been on a tear in all her life. I could hardly stand up when I got down from my engine that night. I was so weak. It took every particle of the sand out of me."

"I told 'em down at the office that if they didn't give me another engine I would quit the road. And I would. I was too old a man to have such jobs as that put up on me."

"But you can't tell what any of 'em will do. It's interesting, but deliver me from engines that think they are jokers."

SUNFLOWER PHILOSOPHY.

(Atholton (Kan.) Globe.)

People are always asking advice and never taking it. Men are like little boys; they all like to have a great big rag tied around a little sore.

If there is going to be money lost the best friend you have in the world would rather see you lose it than to lose it himself.

Every woman believes that if her husband could be married to some other woman a week, he would know better how to appreciate her.

Somehow, when we see a woman who has been married and divorced a number of times, we are reminded of the man who is always failing in business.

hadn't been afloat from my shoes up I might have enjoyed the program. It was a good exhibition of nerve, too. Most kids of that size would have gone up in the air and howled blue murder. But they didn't even show white around the gills.

Inside of ten minutes it was all over. The shower had moved off up into Connecticut, where maybe it was wanted worse, and we got our heads together to map out the next act. Sadie had the say. She was for takin' the kids over to the swell yacht club there, and waitin' until the nurses or some one else came to take 'em off our hands. That suited me, but when it came to gettin' Captain Sir Hunter to march up front and set the pace, he made a strong kick.

"Oh, by jove, now!" says he, "I couldn't think of it. Why, I've been a guest here, y'know, and I might meet some of the fellows."

"What luck!" says Sadie. "That'll be lovely if you do."

"You come along, Woodie," says I. "We've got our orders."

He might have been a stiff-lookin' Englishman before, but he was limp enough now. He looked like a linen collar that had been through the wash and hadn't reached the starch tub. His coat-tails was still drippin' water, and when he walked it sounded like some one was moppin' up a marble floor.

"Only fancy!" says he, "I'll think! he kept sayin' to himself as we got under way."

"They'll take you for an anti-race-suitcase club," says I, "so brace up."

We hadn't more'n struck the clubhouse porch, and the steward had rushed out to drive us away, when Sadie